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PILLSBURY WINTHROP SHAW PITTMAN, LLP			EXAMINER	
P.O. BOX 10500			JACKSON, MICHAEL SCOTT	
MCLEAN, VA 22102			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3622	

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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/092,722

Applicant(s)

OGAWA, MASAHIRO

Examiner

Michael S. Jackson

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 08 March 2002.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-13 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-13 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☒ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date May 28, 2002
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102(b)

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

2. Claims 1-6, 8, 9, 11 and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Ikeda, et. al. U.S. Patent number 5,937,391.
3. As in claim 1, Ikeda, et. al. teaches a virtual mall apparatus, which virtually constructs a virtual mall including a plurality of shops (col. 1, line 44), comprising: a means for producing a purchased item data when a purchase command indicating that a purchaser buys an item at one of the plurality of shops is input, the purchased item data including a store code indicating one of the virtual shops at which the item is purchased and an item code indicating the item purchased (see figure 8); means for checking a plurality of purchased item data of the purchaser whether items are purchased from at least two different virtual shops based on the purchased item data (fig 9); and a means for applying an incentive service to the purchaser if the items are purchased from at least two different shops (fig 16).
4. As in claim 2, Ikeda, et. al. teaches the apparatus of claim 1 wherein the checking means includes a means for discriminating whether at least two different store codes are included in the plurality of purchased item data (col. 13, lines 61-67).
5. As in claim 3, Ikeda, et. al. teaches the apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the checking means includes second means for discriminating whether at least two

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different item codes are included in the plurality of purchased item data (fig 6), and third means for discriminating whether the store codes respectively identifying virtual shops which sell items identified by the at least two different item codes are coincided with one another if the second means determines that the at least two different item codes are included in the plurality of purchased item data, wherein it is determined that the at least two different items are bought at different shops when the third means determines that the store codes are not coincided with one another (fig 8). It is clear from figure 6 that sufficient data is present to discriminate between items and from figure 8 to discriminate between stores as accomplished specifically in claim 18 (col. 15, lines 27-34).

6. As in claim 4, Ikeda, et. al. teaches a virtual mall apparatus comprising: means for virtually constructing a virtual mall including a plurality of virtual shops (fig. 2, item 12; fig. 3); means for generating a purchased item data when a purchase command is input (col. 2, line 64), the purchase command indicating that a purchaser buys an item at one of the plurality of shops, the purchased item data including a store code identifying one of the virtual shops at which the item is purchased, an item code identifying the item purchased and a discount item flag indicating that the purchased item is a discount item, the discount item flag being set where the purchased item is specified as a discount item by one of the plurality of shops; means for discriminating whether items indicated by at least two discount item flags in a plurality of purchased item data are respectively purchased from different shops based on the purchased item data (fig 8); and means for executing a discount if the

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discriminating means determines that the items indicated by the at least two discount item flags are purchased from different shops (col. 14, lines 36-39).

7. As in claim 5, Ikeda, et. al. teaches an apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the discount is applied to items of different shops indicated by the at least two discount item flags, further including means for collecting each discount applied to the items classified by shop (fig 16). In this system, the redemption of the points means to redeem the points for discount, refund or an awarding gift (col. 1, lines 32-33).
8. As in claim 6, Ikeda, et. al. teaches an apparatus according to claim 4 further including means for selecting one item from at least two different items indicated by at least two discount item flags if the at least two different items indicated by the at least two discount item flags are purchased at the same shop (figs. 11 & 12).
9. As per claim 8, Ikeda, et. al. teaches a method for performing a discount service in a virtual mall which comprises a plurality of virtual shops, including steps of:
generating a purchased item data (fig 13) when a purchase command is input, the purchase command indicating that a purchaser buys an item at one of the plurality of shops, the purchased item data including a store code (fig 13, shop "space development" code "5002") identifying one of the virtual shops at which the item is purchased, an item code (fig 13, "goods number) identifying the item purchased and a discount-item flag indicating that the purchased item is a discount item (fig 13, "points deposited"), the discount item flag being set where the purchased item is specified as a discount item by one of the plurality of shops; discriminating whether items indicated by at least two discount item flags in a plurality of purchased item data are respectively purchased from different shops based on the purchased item

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data (fig 8); and executing a discount (col. 16, lines 33-37) if the discriminating means determines that the items indicated by the at least two discount item flags are purchased from different shops.

10. As per claim 9, Ikeda, et. al. teaches a method according to claim 8 further including step of selecting one item from at least two different items indicated by at least two discount item flags if the at least two different items indicated by the at least two discount item flags are purchased at the same shop (fig 11).

11. As per claim 11, Ikeda, et. al. teaches computer executable codes, stored in a computer readable medium, which when executed codes: virtually creating a virtual mall including a plurality of virtual shops (col. 16, lines 13-16); generating a purchased item data when a purchase command is input (col. 16, lines 17-18), the purchase command indicating that a purchaser buys an item at one of the plurality of shops, the purchased item data including a store code identifying one of the virtual shops at which the item is purchased, an item code identifying the item purchased (col. 16, lines 26-29) and a discount item flag indicating that the purchased item is a discount item, the discount item flag being set where the purchased item is specified as a discount item by one of the plurality of shops (col. 16, lines 33-36); discriminating whether items indicated by at least two discount item flags in a plurality of purchased item data are respectively purchased from different shops based on the purchased item data (col. 14, lines 7-10); and executing a discount if the items indicated by the at least two discount item flags are purchased from different shops (figure 8).

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12. As in claim 12, Ikeda, et. al. teaches computer executable codes according to claim 11 further selecting one item from at least two different items (figure 13, col. 9, lines 50) indicated by at least two discount item flags if the at least two different items indicated by the at least two discount item are purchased at the same shop.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102(e)

13. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

14. Claim 1-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Philippe, et. al. U.S. Patent number 6,643,624 B2.
15. As in claim 1, Philippe, et. al. teaches a virtual internet mall (col. 2, lines 66-67; col. 3, lines 1-2), which virtually constructs a virtual mall including a plurality of shops, comprising: a means for producing a purchased item data when a purchase command indicating a purchaser buys an item at one of the plurality of shops is input (col. 7, line 24), the purchase item data including a store code indicating one of

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the virtual shops at which the item is purchased and an item code indicating the item purchased (see fig. 2C and col. 7, line 25 & 31); means for checking a plurality of purchased item data whether items are purchased from at least two different virtual shops based on the purchased item data (col. 6, line 21); and means for applying an incentive service to the purchaser if the items are purchased from at least two different virtual shops (col. 12, line 13).

16. As in claim 2, Philippe, et. al. teaches the apparatus of claim 1 wherein the checking means includes a means for discriminating whether at least two different store codes are included in the plurality of purchased item data (fig 2c).
17. As in claim 3, Philippe, et. al. teaches the apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the checking means includes second means for discriminating whether at least two different item codes are included in the plurality of purchased item data (fig 2c), and third means for discriminating whether the store codes respectively identifying virtual shops which sell items identified by the at least two different item codes are coincided with one another if the second means determines that the at least two different item codes are included in the plurality of purchased item data, wherein it is determined that the at least two different items are bought at different shops when the third means determines that the store codes are not coincided with one another (fig 2c).
18. As in claim 4, Philippe, et. al. teaches a virtual mall apparatus comprising: means for virtually constructing a virtual mall including a plurality of virtual shops (col. 11, lines 60-63); means for generating a purchased item data when a purchase command is input, the purchase command indicating that a purchaser buys an item

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at one of the plurality of shops, the purchased item data including a store code identifying one of the virtual shops at which the item is purchased, an item code identifying the item purchased (col. 12, lines 24-25) and a discount item flag indicating that the purchased item is a discount item, the discount item flag being set where the purchased item is specified as a discount item by one of the plurality of shops (col. 12, line 13); means for discriminating whether items indicated by at least two discount item flags in a plurality of purchased item data are respectively purchased from different shops based on the purchased item data (col. 12, lines 3-9); and means for executing a discount if the discriminating means determines that the items indicated by the at least two discount item flags are purchased from different shops (col. 12, line 13).

Discount item flags would correspond to attributes (col. 13, line 4) in the order entry form necessary for processing the order. An example of such attributes is found in U.S. 5826258 A, which is incorporated by reference in Philippe, et. al. noting a price discount on an apartment if a response is received by a specified date. Philippe, et. al. creates a virtual mall by creating a seem-less interface between the web pages of individual vendors/shops and the customer. Offering discounts for products sold, and therefore, having the ability to account for discounted products through some sort of coding flag was well known in the art at the time of the invention. Philippe, et. al. notes in figure 2C a vendor Barnes and Nobel, Inc. who displays on their webpage of the period in question products discounted (see "bargain books" and "Online Gift Certificates" on reference U on attached PTO-892), supporting the contention that such discounts available on websites was common

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practice. In order for such discounts to be realized, some mechanism would be required (i.e. a discount flag). Examiner thus has construed the product question transactions (col. 7, lines 34-35) of Philippe, et. al. to include discount transactions related to the purchase of a products.

19. As in claim 5, Philippe, et. al. teaches an apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the discount is applied to items of different shops indicated by the at least two discount item flags, further including means for collecting each discount applied to the items classified by shop (col. 11, lines 63-67).

20. As in claim 6, Philippe, et. al. teaches an apparatus according to claim 4 further including means for selecting one item from at least two different items indicated by at least two discount item flags if the at least two different items indicated by the at least two discount item flags are purchased at the same shop (fig 2c).

21. As in claim 7, Philippe, et. al. teaches an apparatus according to claim 6, wherein each item of the at least two different items has a selling price and the selecting means includes means for comparing a selling price of one of the at least two different items with a selling price of the other item to select one item having a higher selling price if selling prices of the at least two different items are different one another (fig 2C).

22. As in claim 8, Philippe, et. al. teaches a method for performing a service in a virtual mall which comprises a plurality of virtual shops, including steps of: generating a purchased item data when a purchase command is input, the purchase command indicating that a purchaser buys an item at one of the plurality of shops, the purchased item data including a store code identifying one of the virtual shops at

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which the item is purchased, an item code identifying the item purchased and a discount-item flag indicating that the purchased item is a discount item, the discount item flag being set where the purchased item is specified as a discount item by one of the plurality of shops (col. 9, lines 53-56); discriminating whether items indicated by at least two discount item flags in a plurality of purchased item data are respectively purchased from different shops based on the purchased item data (col. 9, lines 58-61); and executing a discount if the discriminating means determines that the items indicated by the at least two discount item flags are purchased from different shops (col. 10, lines 15-16). Executing a discount in this instance is a subset of executing a transaction; discount terms being part of the product question transactions (col. 7, lines 34-35).

23. As in claim 9, Philippe, et. al. also teaches a method according to claim 8, further including the step of selecting one item from at least two different items (fig 2c)

24. As in claim 10, Philippe, et. al. teaches a method according to claim 9, wherein each item of the at least two different items has a selling price and the selecting step includes the step of comparing a selling price of one of the at least two different items with a selling price of the other item (fig 2c). At the time of Philippe, et. al. this comparison transaction was done manually (col. 2, line 41) by visiting multiple sites, but in their invention, the buyer was enabled to perform this operation by viewing simultaneously the price data from a plurality of stores, make the necessary price comparisons including product question transactions and execute the final purchase transaction (col. 10, lines 15-16).

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25. As in Claim 11, Philippe, et. al. teaches a computer executable codes, stored in a computer readable medium, which when executed codes: virtually creating a virtual mall including a plurality of virtual shops (col. 12, lines 51, 52); generating a purchased item data when a purchase command is input, the purchase command indicating that a purchaser buys an item at one of the plurality of shops, the purchased item data including a store code identifying one of the virtual shops at which the item is purchased, an item code identifying the item purchased (col. 12, lines 53-55) and a discount item flag indicating that the purchased item is a discount item, the discount item flag being set where the purchased item is specified as a discount item by one of the plurality of shops (col. 13, line 3); discriminating whether items indicated by at least two discount item flags in a plurality of purchased item data are respectively purchased from different shops based on the purchased item data (col. 12, lines 53-54); and executing a discount if the items indicated by the at least two discount item flags are purchased from different shops (col. 13, line 3).
26. As in claim 12, Philippe, et. al. teaches computer executable codes according to claim 11 further selecting one item from at least two different items (col. 12, lines 53-54) indicated by at least two discount item flags if the at least two different items indicated by the at least two discount item are purchased at the same shop.
27. As in claim 13, Philippe, et. al. teaches computer executable codes according to claim 11, wherein each item of the at least two different items has a selling price, comparing a selling price of one of the at least two different items with a selling price of the other item to select one item having a higher selling price if prices of the at least two different items are different one another (col. 14, lines 4-6).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

28. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

29. Claims 7, 10 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ikeda, et. al. U.S. patent number 5,937,391 in view of Philippe, et. al. U.S. patent number 6,643,624.

30. Referring to claim 7, Ikeda, et. al. teaches an apparatus according to claim 6, with all the limitations thereof.

31. Ikeda, et. al. does not expressly teach an apparatus wherein the selecting means includes a means for comparing a selling price of one of the at least two different items with a selling price of the other item to select one item having a higher selling price if selling prices of the at least two different items are different one another.

32. Philippe, et. al. teaches an apparatus according to claim 6, wherein each item of the at least two different items has a selling price and the selecting means includes *means for* comparing a selling price of one of the at least two different items with a selling price of the other item to select one item having a higher selling price if selling prices of the at least two different items are different one another (fig 2C).

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33. A person having ordinary skill in the art would have been aware of these two disclosures and would have been motivated to combine them in order to alleviate the problems outlined in Ikeda, et. al. of stores having to prepare a number of coupons and pay for the coupons [in the actual printing and handling] (Ikeda, et. al. col. 1, line 51-52).
34. Referring to claim 10, Ikeda, et. al. teaches the method of claim 9, with all the limitations thereof.
35. Ikeda, et. al. does not expressly teach a method according to claim 9, wherein each item of the at least two different items has a selling price and the selecting step includes step of comparing a selling price of one of the at least two different items with a selling price of the other item to select one item having a higher selling price if prices of the at least two different items are different to one another.
36. Philippe, et. al. teaches a method for performing a service in a virtual mall which comprises a plurality of virtual shops, including steps of: generating a purchased item data when a purchase command is input, the purchase command indicating that a purchaser buys an item at one of the plurality of shops, the purchased item data including a store code identifying one of the virtual shops at which the item is purchased, an item code identifying the item purchased and a discount-item flag indicating that the purchased item is a discount item, the discount item flag being set where the purchased item is specified as a discount item by one of the plurality of shops (col. 9, lines 53-56); discriminating whether items indicated by at least two discount item flags in a plurality of purchased item data are respectively purchased from different shops based on the purchased item data (col. 9, lines 58-61); and

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executing a discount if the discriminating means determines that the items indicated by the at least two discount item flags are purchased from different shops (col. 10, lines 15-16). Executing a discount in this instance is a subset of executing a transaction; discount terms being part of the product question transactions (col. 7, lines 34-35). Philippe, et. al. also teaches a method further including the step of selecting one item from at least two different items (fig 2c), and a method wherein each item of the at least two different items has a selling price and the selecting step includes the step of comparing a selling price of one of the at least two different items with a selling price of the other item (fig 2c). Philippe, et. al. does not explicitly teach a discounting service.

37. A person having ordinary skill in the art would have been aware of these two disclosures and would have been motivated to combine them in order to alleviate the problems outlined in Ikeda, et. al. of stores in the redemption process (Ikeda, et. al. col. 1, line 51-55).

38. Referring to claim 13, Ikeda, et. al. teaches the system of claim 11 with all the limitations thereof.

39. Ikeda, et. al. does not expressly teach, each item of the at least two different items has a selling price, comparing a selling price of one of the at least two different items with a selling price of the other item to select one item having a higher selling price if prices of the at least two different items are different one another.

40. Philippe, et. al. teaches the system of claim 11, a computer executable codes, stored in a computer readable medium, which when executed codes: virtually creating a virtual mall including a plurality of virtual shops (col. 12, lines 51, 52); generating a

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purchased item data when a purchase command is input, the purchase command indicating that a purchaser buys an item at one of the plurality of shops, the purchased item data including a store code identifying one of the virtual shops at which the item is purchased, an item code identifying the item purchased (col. 12, lines 53-55) and a discount item flag indicating that the purchased item is a discount item, the discount item flag being set where the purchased item is specified as a discount item by one of the plurality of shops (col. 13, line 3); discriminating whether items indicated by at least two discount item flags in a plurality of purchased item data are respectively purchased from different shops based on the purchased item data (col. 12, lines 53-54); and executing a discount if the items indicated by the at least two discount item flags are purchased from different shops (col. 13, line 3).

41. Philippe, et. al. teaches the additional limitation of claim 13 of computer executable codes according to claim 11, wherein each item of the at least two different items has a selling price, comparing a selling price of one of the at least two different items with a selling price of the other item to select one item having a higher selling price if prices of the at least two different items are different one another (col. 14, lines 4-6).

42. A person having ordinary skill in the art would have been aware of these two disclosures and would have been motivated to combine them in order to facilitate customer lock-in and sales promotion as noted in Ikeda, et. al. (col. 1, lines 12-13) and which Ikeda, et. al. notes was one of the most popular types of systems at the time of the invention (Ikeda, et. al. col. 1, line 12).

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Conclusion


43. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Bezos, et. al. U.S. Patent 6,029,141 Internet Based Customer Referral Systems; Storey U.S. Patent 5,774,870 Fully Integrated On-line interactive frequency and award redemption program; and Dixon, et. al. U.S. Patent No. 6328339 B1 System, method and apparatus for coupon processing and booklet.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Michael S. Jackson whose telephone number is (571) 270-1364. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Thurs 7:30AM - 5:00PM (EST).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick J. Nolan can be reached on (571) 272-0847. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.


PATRICK J. NOLAN, PH.D.
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
10/16/06


Primary Examiner